

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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P R 151055Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9023

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 0101

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MASS, ML, UV

SUBJECT: MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE

REF: STATE 009283

1. PRESIDENT LAMIZANA ASKED TO SEE ME LATE AFTERNOON JANUARY 14. HE SAID THAT, AS RESULT OF MALIAN ATTACKS ON VOLTAN TERRITORY, HE HAD DECIDED TO REORGANIZE AND STRENGTHEN VOLTAN ARMY. IN ADDITION TO TWO BATTALIONS NOW BASED RESPECTIVELY IN BOBO AND OUAGA, THREE NEW BATTALIONS WOULD BE FORMED AND WOULD BE BASED IN OUAHIGOUYA, DORI AND FADA N'GOURMA RESPECTIVELY. EVENTUALLY, A SIXTH BATTALION MAY BE FORMED TO BE BASED IN GAOUA.

2. LAMIZANA SAID THAT GOUV WAS READY TO PAY CASH FOR THE EQUIPMENT AND ARMAMENTS NEEDED FOR THESE NEW BATTALIONS. HE HOPED THAT THE USG WOULD FACILITATE
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THE PURCHASE AND DESPATCH OF THE EQUIPMENT. HE WANTED

TO ASSURE ME THAT UPPER VOLTA HAD NO INTENTION OF WAGING WAR AGAINST MALI BUT IT HAD TO BE IN A POSITION TO DEFEND ITS BORDERS IN ORDER TO PROCEED IN PEACE WITH THE VITAL TASK OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. IT WAS VERY RELUCTANTLY THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO BUY ARMS AND HE WOULD MUCH PREFER TO USE THESE FUNDS FOR MORE PRODUCTIVE ENDEAVORS. UNFORTUNATELY HE HAD NO CHOICE.

3. AT ANY RATE, BESIDES GIVING UPPER VOLTA THE SECURITY IT NEEDED, THE VARIOUS BATTALIONS WOULD BE USED FOR CIVIC ACTION PROGRAMS CONNECTED WITH UPPER VOLTA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS. THERE WAS PLENTY OF WORK TO BE DONE AND VOLTAN SOLDIERS WOULD BE PUT TO WORK.

4. I ASKED LAMIZANA WHETHER HE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WORK OF MEDIATION COMMISSION. HE SAID HE WAS BUT HE DID NOT TRUST MALI. THE PROBLEM IN MALI WAS THAT COLONEL TRAORE DID NOT CONTROL HIS MINISTERS, PARTICULARLY THE DEFENSE MINISTER. THERE WAS NO COORDINATION ON POLICY DECISIONS. PERHAPS TRAORE HAD BEEN SINCERE AT FARAMANA BUT HE OBVIOUSLY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONVINCE HIS COLLEAGUES. THIS COULD HAPPEN AGAIN. IF THE MEDIATION COMMISSION RULED IN FAVOR OF UPPER VOLTA, THE "HOT HEADS" IN BAMAKO WOULD FIND SOME OTHER WAY OF CREATING TROUBLE. FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS, THE FOUR MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY SUB-COMMISSION HAD BEEN SURVEYING THE CONTESTED AREA IN ORDER TO INSURE THAT THE WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS HAD TAKEN PLACE AND, TO PRESIDENT'S KNOWLEDGE, THEY HAD SO FAR ENCOUNTERED NO PROBLEM. ON THE OTHER HAD, THE WORK OF THE LEGAL SUB-COMMISSION WOULD PROBABLY TAKE A LONG TIME.

5. MEANWHILE, THERE WAS DANGER THAT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN MALI WOULD DETERIORATE FURTHER AND MIGHT PROMPT MALIAN GOVERNMENT TO ENGAGE IN NEW MILITARY ADVENTURES. PRESIDENT SAID THAT, IN CONTRAST TO UPPER VOLTA WHICH HAD A RESERVE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE, MALI WAS HEAVILY IN DEBT AND WAS EXPERIENCING GREAT DIFFICULTY IN SERVICING ITS FOREIGN DEBTS. THE CLOSING OF THE MALI-
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UPPER VOLTA BORDER MADE THE SITUATION IN MALI EVEN MORE DIFFICULT AND COLONEL TRAORE HAD ASKED THAT BORDER BE REOPENED. LAMIZANA SAID HE WAS READY TO AGREE TO THIS, BUT WITH THE PROVISIO THAT THERE WOULD BE STRICT CONTROL ON MOVEMENTS OF MALIANS ACROSS BORDER. HE RECALLED THAT, DURING DECEMBER 11 INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS IN OUAGA AND BOBO, GOUV HAD DISCOVERED A LARGE NUMBER OF MALIAN OFFICERS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES

WHO HAD BEEN ABLE TO CROSS BORDER IN ORDER TO OBSERVE VOLTAN TROOPS ON PARADE. A FEW DAYS LATER MALIAN ARMY HAD INVADED VOLTAN TERRITORY, SECURED IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THE MAIN BODY OF UPPER VOLTA'S ARMY WAS STILL CONFINED TO THE OUAGA AND BOBO AREAS.

6. I THANKED PRESIDENT FOR HIS REMARKS AND TOLD HIM THAT I WOULD CONVEY THEM TO THE DEPARTMENT. IN PARTING, PRESIDENT REITERATED HIS OPE THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD DO ALL IT COULD TO FACILITATE THE PURCHASE OF ARMS IN THE UNITED STATES.

7. COMMENT: PRESIDENT LAMIZANA WAS MOST CORDIAL THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION AND APPEARED FAR MORE RELAXED THAT THE LST TIME I SAW HIM. I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT AMBASSADOR YAGUIBOU HAD URGED HIM TO MAKE THIS DEMARCHE BUT THAT, GIVEN UPPER VOLTA'S WILLINGNESS TO PAY CASH, HE DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM, AND WAS NOT CONVINCED THAT DEMARCHE WAS REALLY NECESSARY. HIS PRESENTATION WAS CERTAINLY NOT AS FORCEFUL AS I HAD EXPECTED. HE DID NOT ONCE MENTION THE POSSIBILITY OF GRANT AID OR CREDIT SALES.
GRAHAM

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